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ABSTRACT

The University of New Mexico (UNM) Valencia campus is a two-year college in rural Valencia County. UNM-Valencia provides vocational and general education, basic skills assistance, a community education program and a small business development program. In fall 1998, the campus had 750 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students and 807 part-time students; 52% of the students were Hispanic, and 41% were non-Hispanic white. In July 1997, UNM-Valencia received a $1.1 million contract from the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) to run a Welfare-to-Work program. The campus developed SU! PARTE (Sign Up! People Acting Responsibly Through Employment) to assess, provide training and support services to, and place TANF and food-stamp recipients who were referred for mandatory program participation by the HSD. More than 80% of SU! PARTE participants do not have a high school diploma, 40% have never held a job, many are victims of domestic violence, and many tested at educational levels below 2nd grade. The SU! PARTE program offers a core class that tackles self-esteem issues as part of the assessment process, along with continued management, transportation, and child care information and assistance. SU! PARTE also has a van service that brings students to campus, and provides substance abuse treatment, domestic violence counseling, and housing assistance to the homeless. Curriculum includes basic and life skills classes. (NB)

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The SU PARTE Welfare-to-Work Initiative
University of New Mexico Valencia Campus

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Introduction

The New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) has funded, as part of its Welfare-to-Work program delivery system, several regional contractors to provide job development, on-site work training, short-term vocational training, job retention services, and/or mentoring.[1] Some of these contractors or subcontractors are community colleges. Since the state's final Welfare-to-Work legislation was not enacted until April 1998 many of the contracted or subcontracted colleges had just received their funding or were still negotiating their contracts in late 1998. However, a few colleges, including the University of New Mexico (UNM)-Valencia Campus, were funded mid 1997 before the state's first Welfare-to-Work law was determined unconstitutional. At the time of our visit the UNM-Valencia Campus Welfare-to-Work program had been operational for about 16 months.

The UNM-Valencia Campus is situated in rural Valencia County about 35 miles south of Albuquerque. The county has a population of 65,000 and an unemployment rate of 5.3 percent. Belén and Los Lunas are the county's two main population centers with about 7300 inhabitants each. UNM-Valencia Campus is a two-year college serving the needs of the local community by providing vocational and general education, basic skills assistance, a Community Education program and a Small Business Development program.[2] As of the fall of 1998 the campus had 750 full time equivalent students and 807 part-time students. Fifty-two percent of its students were Hispanic and 41 percent were non-Hispanic white. As a branch campus of the University of New Mexico the

[1] Work Programs Service Delivery chart 1/99

UNM-Valencia Campus comes under the university's administrative and academic control. UNM-Valencia Campus' Executive Director reports to one of the university's Associate Provosts. However, the university does not fund the campus. Instead it receives its funding through direct state appropriations, tax levies, students tuition and fees, and special grants.[3] In July 1997, the UNM-Valencia Campus obtained a $1.1 million contract from the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) to run a Welfare-to-Work program. After some delays due to court challenges to the state's welfare reform legislation the UNM-Valencia Campus' SU! PARTE program (Sign Up! People Acting Responsibly Through Employment) got fully underway in December 1997. The program is under contract from HSD to assess, provide training and support services to, and place TANF and food stamp recipients. Since December 1997, SU! PARTE has served approximately 2000 clients referred for mandatory program participation by the Income Support Division of Valencia County's HSD. SU! PARTE is a social service agency within an educational entity. It provides case management, job placement, life skills, job skills and job search training and some vocational training. It is part of the UNM-Valencia Campus community outreach role as the only institution with the facilities and infrastructure to respond to the needs of TANF clients in Valencia County. The large majority of SU! PARTE clients are Latino (80 to 85 percent) and 25 percent are men. However, more than anything else, the program is informed by the fact that, compared to other Welfare-to-Work programs nationally, SU! PARTE serves "a disproportionately high number of people who meet the 'hard to serve' criteria."[4]

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[2] University of New Mexico - Valencia Campus 1997-1999 Catalog p. 9-10

[3] Idem

[4] SU PARTE monthly report for February 1999. The report was issued after the SU PARTE manager had

Participants tend to have very low educational levels. More than 80 percent do not have a high school diplomat and many tested at educational levels below the 2nd grade.[5] In addition, 40 percent of SU! PARTE clients have never held a job and many are victims of domestic violence.

Counseling and Support Services

The Valencia Campus as a whole has been serving students needing remedial education for many years. 70 percent of the students enrolled in college classes have taken one or more developmental courses designed to help them enter college level classes. Developmental instruction courses in reading, writing, and math are offered for credit as part of the regular curriculum. The Student Enrichment Center, which is free to enrolled students, also provides tutoring in math, English, and science, as well as study groups, workshops, and tutorial computer programs. To assist new students the college's Student Service Center conducts student orientations, placement testing, and academic advising as well as skills building workshops open to all students. The workshops focus on time management, learning styles, effective textbook reading, anxiety in college, communication styles, and note taking. UNM-Valencia Campus has also been dedicated to serving the basic skills needs of its community through its Adult Education Center. The center supplies free instruction in reading, writing, math, ESL, GED, citizenship, and employability skills. To improve students' access to the center's services some of the ESL classes are offered off campus at sites which have daycare facilities. The Adult

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attended a national conference of welfare to work programs.

[5] Among about 400 students whose academic levels were tested 5.4% had scores bellow 2nd grade level and 51.4% tested bellow the 6th grade level.

Education Center also has a Building Leadership through Adult Student Training (BLAST) program to help students build leadership skills which will allow them to succeed.[6] The center's coordinator estimated that before SU! PARTE was established about a third of the students served by the center were welfare recipients.

The SU! PARTE program initiated new counseling and support services for clients. The first of these services is a three tiered assessment process. The state Welfare-to-Work legislation requires that the employability assessment of aid recipients take place within 15 days of an applicant's approval and that within 60 days they are in a work activity. In addition to meeting the state requirements, the SU! PARTE assessment process is designed to familiarize clients with the services provided by SU! PARTE, make them aware of the new provisions of the New Mexico Works welfare reform, and help them with career exploration. The assessment also allows SU! PARTE staff to know their clients better and establish a relationship with them as they start the program. The first part of the assessment is an orientation and preliminary assessment. The two and a half hour orientation contains several self assessment tools, including a Career Decision Making psychology survey,[7] which clients complete and return to the case manager at the end of the orientation. A mandatory three-week core class "Creating a Masterful Worklife" follows the orientation. SU! PARTE clients complete their assessment by an individual appointment with one of the program's case managers. At the time of our visit the program had two case managers who had assessed on average a total of 27

[6] Adult Education Center brochure

[7] The Harrington-O'Shea Career Decision-Making System Revised. Published by the American Guidance Service, Inc.

students a week in January and February 1999. The three part assessment process, despite its limitations due to the large number of students assessed with only two case managers, has evolved into a system which gathers large amounts of information about the students in a short time.

One of the strengths of the assessment process is its core class. Low self-esteem is a serious impediment for many SU! PARTE clients; the core class is able to tackle clients' low self esteem at the very beginning of their participation in the program. According to students, the "Creating a Masterful Life" instructor addresses the issue of self esteem by listening to them and giving them a sense of direction and a sense that they can attain their employment or educational goals. He also provides them with specific tools that they can apply immediately. Furthermore, the class is an opportunity for SU! PARTE clients to meet other program participants and realize they are not alone.[8] This class, along with the rest of the SU! PARTE classes, has been credited with helping clients become more social which benefits both their personal life and work experience. One student tellingly nicknamed the core class "anger management class."

[8] This review of the core class is based on comments from students who attended the class and a report on student's class evaluations.

In addition to its assessment process SU! PARTE provides continued case management, transportation, and child care information and assistance. For example, as part of their outreach efforts SU! PARTE staff will call all clients who missed a day of class to determine what the problem was and find a solution. To assist with students' transportation needs a van service operates three times a day (morning, lunch, and afternoon) to bring SU! PARTE clients to the UNM-Valencia Campus. It is also available to take clients to job interviews and has been used on occasion to drive clients to and from work if no other means of transportation was available. Due to liability concerns the van cannot transport children. On average it covers 2000 miles a month and serves 20 to 40 SU! PARTE participants several of whom use the van because, being free, it is more economical than using their own car. There is currently no child care facility at the UNM-Valencia Campus although one is under construction. Childcare assistance is provided to SU! PARTE participants through state Child, Youth, and Families Department subsidies. However, the child must be in a registered day care for the subsidies to apply. This is an obstacle for many SU! PARTE clients who do not want strangers taking care of their children and/or whose child care providers are not registered. To alleviate this problem SU! PARTE case managers assist participants get a family member or current child care provider registered by informing them of the requirements and helping with the application if needed. Another obstacle was that clients had to travel to Albuquerque to process the required paperwork. In its continued attempt to eliminate barriers to clients' participation in the program, SU! PARTE arranged for the Albuquerque office of Child, Youth, and Families to send a representative to the Valencia campus twice a month to process clients' applications for subsidies and register child-care

providers. Three new daycare centers[9] run by former SU! PARTE clients were established through SU! PARTE's cooperation with the local HSD office and the UNM-Valencia Campus Small Business Development Center. These daycare centers provide full time employment for the three clients who run them. SU! PARTE contracted the child care training and provided support services. The HSD, through an agreement with the Child, Youth, and Families department, advanced the start up costs for each day care center.[10] Additional support services were provided by the Small Business Development Center staff. They worked individually with each child care trainee to help them develop a business plan and obtain business licenses and tax identification numbers in order to comply with the New Mexico Works requirements for a "self-employed" work activity. The Small Business Development Center has regularly assisted SU! PARTE clients develop business plans and look for capital. The Center offers seminars, loan proposals, marketing materials, individual counseling, business books and videos, and business and marketing plans. One staff member is a former AFDC recipient who does frequent outreach towards SU! PARTE clients and often presents at the SU! PARTE orientations.

To address barriers to clients employment SU! PARTE also provides substance abuse treatment, domestic violence counseling, and assistance looking for a home for those participants who are homeless. Most of these services are furnished through purchase service agreements SU! PARTE has with community agencies. Domestic violence is a

[9] Each day care center can take up to 8 children.

[10] The funding of the child care centers is discussed further in the program design section as a example of the good cooperative relationship developed between SU PARTE and HSD.

concern for many SU! PARTE clients. At the Valencia Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence 65 percent of clients are welfare recipients. The shelter staff believes that as much as 80 to 85 percent of SU! PARTE clients might be victims of domestic violence. Information on domestic violence and the services of the Valencia shelter are included as part of the SU! PARTE orientation packet and shelter staffmembers make a short presentation on domestic violence at every orientation. One of the consequences of SU! PARTE's presence on campus has been a slight increase in violent behavior. However, SU! PARTE has provided funding to increase the security on campus. In accord with the state legislation, other support services for which SU! PARTE participants are eligible include financial assistance for educational fees, books and supplies as well as "ususal employment expenses connected with getting or keeping a job."[11] The good communication between HSD and SU! PARTE staff helps ensure the delivery of these services. SU! PARTE case managers certify the need for reimbursement of these expenses, which are paid directly to clients by the HSD. Because SU! PARTE is funded by the New Mexico HSD, services can only be delivered to clients approved by HSD. Furthermore, the availability of these support services is contingent on the continued funding of the program.

The strengths of the SU! PARTE support services lie in the extensive assessment process, the links with other service providers and agencies such as the Domestic Violence Shelter and the state's local HSD office, and the encouragement, support, and commitment of the program's instructors and case managers. These elements are key

[11] Orientation handouts.

to the program's ability to address the low self esteem, domestic violence history, and other challenges facing many of its clients. To better understand the contributions of instructors and how SU! PARTE tackles the low education levels of its clients the next section focuses on issues of pedagogy and curriculum.

Pedagogy and Curriculum

All of the SU! PARTE courses are provided in collaboration with the Adult Education Center and the Community Education Services. SU! PARTE draws on the pedagogical experience of these two programs, especially the expertise of the Adult Education Center in working with students who have low education level. In addition to the core class, which is part of the assessment process, the courses offered by SU! PARTE include Job Club, GED, ESL, and life skills classes in Computer Fundamentals, Microsoft Word, Receptionist, and Employability Skills. Childcare training is also available through a contract with an outside provider. Additional vocational training is provided through a few UNM-Valencia Campus classes or directly by employers. Much of the training for SU! PARTE clients is focused on basic education and, overall, the instruction is student-centered and hands-on.

The need to focus on basic skills became apparent to SU! PARTE's program manager, Yvonne Hart, as more and more students were assessed. The program's instruction had been designed to include basic skills. However, the need for basic skills assistance was much greater than had originally been anticipated when the program proposal was prepared. Hart illustrated this in a January 31, 1999 report on the in-school grade level

completed and ABE level test results of SU! PARTE students. Of the1192 TANF recipients assessed 81.4 percent had not completed high school or earned a GED. About a 400 of those TANF recipients were tested, with 5.4 percent scoring bellow a 2nd grade level, 51.4 percent scored bellow 6th grade level and about 85 percent scored bellow 9th grade level. The SU! PARTE program also assessed 537 food stamp recipients. This group tested at a slightly higher grade level although 80.2 percent still scored bellow a 9th grade level.[12]

In assessing and serving the needs of these adult learners the SU! PARTE program benefits from the experience and methodology developed by the UNM-Valencia Campus Adult Education Center (AEC). The Center has produced materials and tools which allow educators to implement a portfolio assessment process for placing students and tracking their progress "without the use of standardized tests that compare adults to elementary and secondary school children."[13] The materials developed also "show cultural sensitivity for the many cultures represented in New Mexico."[14] This method involves the student in developing their educational plan and evaluating their skills, thus engaging them in learning how to learn. Students must master specific competencies and self report on their skill level, which is then reviewed by an instructor or tutor. As part of this process students maintain a portfolio of materials documenting their progress. However, in addition to the low grade level at which many of SU! PARTE participants tested, instructors found that the self management (studying, attending

[12] SU PARTE In-School Grade Level Completed/ ABE Level Test Results hand out.

[13] Authentic Assessment for New Mexican Adults: A collaborative Process: produced by the Faculty, Staff and Students of UNM-Valencia Campus Adult Education Center.

classes, maintaining a portfolio...) required for the basic skills classes and especially the GED preparation was an obstacle for SU! PARTE students. Many students dropped out of the GED class. Consequently, it was redesigned into an intensive program using some pedagogical insights from the disability and vocational rehabilitation fields such as the need for students to meet in the same place at the same time. SU! PARTE ŒD students now meet 20 hours a week in the same classroom with the same instructor. The instructor has developed her own teaching methods drawing from her training and the experience of the AEC. She is included as part of both the SU! PARTE and AEC staff and attends AEC staff training. In her GED course she does not lecture. Instead, all of her classes are based on student participation. Math is taught in a discovery mode, for example using pizza slices to learn about fractions. In English she uses the AEC's river of life project idea whereby students use their life experiences as a basis for their essays. She also publishes as much of her students' writing as possible so they "understand themselves as people in a community which have things to say." Her students' writing has been published in the Head Start and SU! PARTE newsletters as well as on the web. The publication of their work also helps boost students' self esteem. At the end of the first six months of the new GED class format a total of 70 students had enrolled in the class, 19 students took the GED test and 16 passed. Four of these students had originally scored bellow a sixth grade level. The three students who did not pass were only missing the math section of the GED. Twelve of the 19 students who took the GED have since enrolled in college.

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[14] Idem

The life skills classes offered by SU! PARTE also engage students and help them master basic skills. They are designed to increase students' comfort and basic competencies to succeed in either college or employer-based vocational training. One Microsoft Word instructor explained that she gets on the students' level so that they can relax and be excited to be in class. She also combines basic skills, such as teaching students how to take notes, into her curriculum. Her classes are hands-on because she finds she has a lot of experiential learners. In addition, she provides students with step by step handouts for them to have as a reference and to assist students who may have a different learning style. The Receptionist Skills instructor has worked in adult basic education for about 18 years. Her classes combine lectures with videos, discussions, case scenarios, student writing samples, and hands-on telephone interaction. She describes her classes as designed for students to be pro-active instead of reactive. The Employability Skills class also uses role-playing and is discussion-centered.

In its pedagogical approaches SU! PARTE also draws on methodologies developed and practiced in the disability and Vocational rehabilitation fields for about fifteen years. These are part of SU! PARTE manager Yvonne Hart's expertise. These methodologies have proven to be relevant for the TANF population. The best example is the Job Club class. It is based on the Azrin model from the 1970s' that uses a behavioral approach to assist people who need support in learning how to find a job. The model was originally developed for chronic mental illness patients who are believed to be one of the hardest populations to place in jobs. The model was adapted to meet the requirements of New Mexico Works and the unique learning needs of SU! PARTE participants. In addition to

implementing this adapted Azrin model the Job Club instructor brings her own wealth of experience to the class. She has work experience in many fields and degrees in vocational education and counseling. She also runs her own business through which she provides job retention training and career strategies and organization development consultancy. Her approach is multifaceted. She provides job search strategies and coaching, teaches some basic computer skills to the computer illiterate, introduces students to a few helpful workplace skills, and provides them with a lot of support and encouragement. This multifaceted approach is important because 40 percent of SU! PARTE's clients have never held jobs previously and more than 80 percent have not completed high school. In addition, when they join the Job Club they are often under time pressure to find employment. She teaches students how to use the campus' DOL office resources and makes them aware that there is a hidden job market that they need to tap into. She helps students write their own resumes, and thus get to learn basic computer applications. She gets them on the phone contacting employers. However, she also works on boosting their self-esteem. She encourages students to ask for advice or other assistance and makes them aware that they can leave her a voice mail message 24 hours a day. At the time of our visit she was trying to develop more follow up with her students to work on job retention. For example, she helps them address issues of conflict management in the workplace, introduces them to the idea that in a company everyone is a customer (inside and outside the company), and provides career development and career coaching. The Job Club has been very successful since 90 to 100 percent of its students find employment.

Feedback from instructors and students pointed to another important role fulfilled by instructors. They make students feel good about themselves by treating them with respect and instilling that someone cares. Students we spoke to all felt instructors were non-judgmental and helped boost the students' self-esteem. Similar opinions have been expressed in student surveys. Instructors felt that through interactions with other students and instructors SU! PARTE clients were also noticeably more social.

The pedagogy used by SU! PARTE builds on both methodologies from the disability/vocational rehabilitation fields and practices already taking place in the Adult Basic Education classes of the UNM-Valencia Campus. This is not entirely surprising since about a third of the ABE student have tended to be welfare recipients. According to one of the SU! PARTE students now enrolled at the college compared to the other college classes, the SU! PARTE classes provide students with extra support and encouragement. SU! PARTE instructors also continue to be a resource for those participants who pursue further training at the college. The strength of the SU! PARTE pedagogy lies in its student-centered teaching and the investment of instructors in their students.

Program Design I- Curricular and Structural Changes

The UNM-Valencia Campus had initially expected that, with the assistance of remedial education, about 30 percent of SU! PARTE clients would enroll in the college's regular programs. Indeed, students can choose from thirteen one year certificates which allow them to obtain marketable skills. Certificates are offered in Banking, Business

Management, Computer Accounting, Computer-aided Drafting, Early Childhood Multi-cultural Education, Education (elementary and secondary), Human Services, Microcomputer Systems Support, Office and Business Technology, Real Estate, Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology and Studio Art. Furthermore, all certificates can be credited toward a two-year AA degree and in most cases towards a four-year degree. The problem is that many of the SU! PARTE participants do not have the basic skills level needed for these classes or even for some of the developmental classes. There is also little time for remedial education, especially GED preparation, due to the state mandated time limits SU! PARTE clients are under. In addition, about 30 percent of SU! PARTE clients are not interested in attending college. As a result of these factors, SU! PARTE has focused on basic skills and entry level job training with the objective of placing students in jobs. The program is designed to obtain feedback that can inform continued program improvements. These are made possible due to the flexibility with which the curriculum can be changed and the close working relationship established with other entities especially the HSD. Overall the SU! PARTE program is based on the Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation techniques of community inclusion and connecting individuals. Hence the importance of the ties between SU! PARTE participants and their instructors and case managers.

One of the design features of the SU! PARTE program is its consumer driven approach to program management. This approach is premised on a market based management style that views SU! PARTE clients, the HSD offices, employers, the college, and contracted service providers as clients of the program. As part of this method student

course evaluations were carried out, a survey of over 800 program users was conducted, meetings were held with employers, and employers in the disability and health care industries were surveyed. SU! PARTE's services and classes were then adapted in response to the feedback obtained. For example, as a result of students' responses in surveys and course evaluations the core class was integrated into the required assessment process. SU! PARTE program manager Yvonne Hart's management style also focuses on student tracking and monthly program evaluations/updates which allow her, the college, and the HSD contract manager to see the big picture. The ability to know who her clients are and what, for example, their math and English skill levels are has been a key element in SU! PARTE's successful program design. One of the goals of this approach is drawn form the Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation fields where a regular assessment of the population served is used to make changes which reduce the need for additional support services.

Because SU! PARTE operates as a designated program with its own budget, classes, and instructors it can more easily restructure its curriculum on the initiative of its program manager. Since its inception SU! PARTE has changed its course content and scheduling several times to better correspond to the needs of students, employers, and changes in regulations. This is facilitated by the responsive and flexible program development of the Adult Education Center and the Community Education Program, the two organizations with which SU! PARTE works on curriculum design and implementation. The AEC's Coordinator uses a participatory management style in which instructors are involved in program design changes and students' feedback is also taken into account.

The AEC is also flexible in the format of its classes, some of which it offers off campus or as open entry/open exit. The Community Education program is a self-supporting program that hires its own instructors through short-term contracts and is constantly updating its course offerings. The Community Education and Adult Education Center coordinators' skills and their willingness to try new things and take risks contribute to SU! PARTE's ability to improve its curriculum in response to the feedback it obtains. Another aspect of SU! PARTE's flexibility is that it is able to draw on outside resources to further improve its curriculum. The SU! PARTE Life Skills courses were designed with the assistance of an industrial trainer recruited from a private corporation. She is also the Employability Skills instructor. She was instrumental in adapting the courses in response to the needs identified by the employers surveyed. SU! PARTE can provide entry level training and other services through the use of contract trainers and purchase services agreements. SU! PARTE contracts CYFD approved child-care training from a group called Carino. Although the UNM-Valencia Campus has certificates and associate degrees in Early Childhood Multicultural Education and Elementary and Secondary Education there is no established link between the Carino training and those programs. Hence one of the drawbacks of using contract trainers is that if students want to continue along a career ladder at a two-year college there are no clear equivalencies for the training they received. SU! PARTE also contracts domestic violence counseling services from the Valencia domestic violence shelter. Yvonne Hart, the SU! PARTE program manager, explained that by paying local non-profits and other groups to provide services to her clients she is also "building resources for when we are gone."

Another important part of SU! PARTE's cooperation with outside entities is its close and structured collaboration with the Valencia HSD. The Valencia HSD office determines the eligibility of families to receive TANF and food stamp assistance and faxes SU! PARTE a referral list of cases to be assessed. The Valencia HSD office also determines and interprets the policy with which SU! PARTE must work. The staff from both offices meet once a month to share information, staff difficult cases, and update each other on policy and other changes taking place. In addition, the case managers from both programs communicate by telephone regularly. According to both the SU! PARTE program manager, and Albert Delgado, county manager for NMHSD, this has allowed for very good cooperation between their offices. For example, a HSD cash advance arrangement provided three SU! PARTE clients with the start up costs for their daycare centers. Despite the fact that the option for such expenditures was created at the cabinet level, Valencia County is the only county in the state that was able to obtain this support for its clients. Hart attributes this to the cooperation and extra effort of SU! PARTE staff and HSD case workers. In addition to maintaining close links with the Valencia county HSD office, the SU! PARTE manager is in regular contact with the program's contract manager in the state office of HSD. She sends the contract manager a monthly report on the program's activities and the numbers of clients it has served and placed.

SU! PARTE's program design has also been influenced by the fact that several area employers prefer to train their new entry level hires themselves. Indeed, Hart found that in the disability and health care industries there are many entry level jobs available

and employers prefer to do their own training so it integrates their corporate values and philosophy. Furthermore, in the case of the disability industry, staff training is mandated by the state and is transferable to other employers. SU! PARTE found that its clients could be hired competitively and then paid to receive corporate training. However, there are no equivalencies between corporate and community college training whereby corporate training can be credited towards further education in the field of health care such as the UNM-Valencia Campus' Certified Nurses Assistant program. Instead of teaching specific vocational skills employers wanted SU! PARTE to provide its clients with the basic skills they would need to successfully complete the corporate training programs. Consequently, SU! PARTE hired an industry trainer to design and teach the Employability Skills class, which focuses on self-esteem activities, values, communication, and managing transition. A one-year Job Skills Certificate was also designed for SU! PARTE by the Community Education Center. At the time of our visit it was being reviewed by local manufacturers and had not yet been implemented. It includes classes in math, English, computer applications, and job skills. However, it too is not a transferable certificate. Its main objective is to provide SU! PARTE clients with the basic skills they will need for many entry-level jobs. Nevertheless, it may also help some students pursue other college classes. For example, the computer application classes offered by SU! PARTE are used by some students to transition into the UNM-Valencia Campus regular Office and Business Technology certificate and associate programs. One of the SU! PARTE Microsoft Word instructors reported that the instructor for the college's Introduction to Microcomputer Applications felt the SU! PARTE students were well prepared for the class. The weakness of many of the SU! PARTE training programs

remains that they do not provide clear career ladders for program participants.

Another training option used by SU! PARTE is that it pays a prorated portion of a class such as Certified Nurses Assistant so its clients can participate on a non-credit basis. SU! PARTE is also participating in collaborative training programs. For example, a new Medical Insurance Billing & Coding program was just created as a partnership between SU! PARTE, the Community Education Center, the chair of the Business and Technology department, and the Department of Labor's campus office. SU! PARTE will provide students and support services. The Community Education Center and the Business and Technology department are providing the instructor and curriculum design and JTPA is funding the class and students' books and supplies. It will be a six-month program of night classes and will include externships with, for example, Blue Cross Blue Shield. Instructors will be responsible for students' placement. Graduates should earn $8 to $10 an hour. SU! PARTE has also had an effect on the college's general courses, some of which are being shortened. For example, the one-year Certified Nurses Assistant program is being redesigned as an intensive one semester program. Furthermore, the college intends to house more short term training programs in the new addition it is building. As a result more career ladder options may be developed.

A recent addition to SU! PARTE's program design is its job trial program. Its aim is to provide clients with concrete job experience that teaches them skills but especially allows them to make job choices with an understanding of the work environment that suits them best. The job trial program is designed as an open entry/open exit life skills class.

Every week students attend a three-hour class focused on job matching and job analysis tools. In addition, four hours a day for five days they are placed in a different work environments at the UNM-Valencia Campus in which they gain hands on experience. The instructor also provides coaching in the different environments. Students must try a new work environment every week. They can choose to work in an office, food service, janitorial, receptionist, or retail (at the college bookstore) environment. This job trial program has become one of the most popular life skills classes.[15] It is made possible because of the cooperation of campus staff in these various work environments and is an example of the way in which SU! PARTE has been able to draw on the resources of the campus at large.

SU! PARTE is a dedicated program, which gives it the ability to be more flexible in terms of curriculum and program design and provides students with a supportive classroom environment. SU! PARTE's collaborative work with other programs on campus, the DOL, and HSD is also one of its strengths. It is designed to serve students with low skills some of who need to find a job quickly because they are nearing the end of their time limits and/or are under the threat of benefit sanctions. Nevertheless, those students who have the ability to enter college level courses do have options available to them. The main weakness of the program is its lack of career ladders.

[15] According to a conversation with SU PARTE manager in June 1999.

Program Design II- Links to Industry

Some links with employers had already been established by the UNM-Valencia Campus Career Center prior to the SU! PARTE program as part of the Career Center's cooperative education and job shadowing programs. The center maintains a database of about 300 employers. It also organizes the campus' annual job fair, which is attended by about 40 employers. However, the coordinator of Career Services specializes mostly in career counseling. At the time of our visit, the career center had a vacancy and was in the process of hiring a new full time employee to maintain their employer database and contacts. The college is also in contact with small business owners through its Small Business Development Center, which provides many free services to those operating or wanting to start a small business. Another way in which the UNM-Valencia Campus works with employer is by providing contract education. Most contract education is done through the Community Education program. For example, the county's manufacturing employers developed a certification training through the UNM-Valencia campus continuing education program which will deal with health and safety issues in plant production.

In addition to its direct contacts with employers the Valencia Campus also houses a Department of Labor office. After fifteen years without an office in the county, the campus leadership managed to succeed in convincing the Department of Labor to establish its permanent office for Valencia County on the UNM-Valencia Campus. In June 1997, Employment Security Area Director Bill Calderon opened a DOL area office at the campus. It has a staff of three people to serve the 65,000 inhabitants of Valencia

County with regards to employment, unemployment, veterans services, and a total of 27 programs. In addition, it provides access to the DOL's regional and national job database. Calderon will soon add a One Stop Job Center on the Valencia Campus. Although these services are designed for the county at large, their location on the Valencia Campus makes them readily available to students. Furthermore, the Valencia County DOL was originally going to hire several job developers to service the SU! PARTE clients. However, the governor of New Mexico put a freeze on new hires for the state DOL. As a result, SU! PARTE turned to hiring its own job developers but had been unsuccessful due to complications caused by the university personnel hiring system and the difficulty of finding qualified employees.

Nevertheless, the SU! PARTE program manager, Yvonne Hart, has established contacts with local employers. They have reviewed programs set up by SU! PARTE and trained and hired SU! PARTE clients. Since he was hired in November 1998, the SU! PARTE program coordinator, Gary Sanchez, has also been meeting with employers to determine what their employee needs and training criteria are. SU! PARTE has determined that the hot employment areas for their clients are medical receptionist, call centers such as Sprint and MCI (in the last year 7000 jobs were created in that area), truck driving, the care giver industry, and the Walmart distribution center which opened in the fall of 1998. Although the SU! PARTE program coordinator met with Walmart representatives to better understand their selection criteria (a GED and a positive work history and interview) these have been restrictive as they are difficult for the SU! PARTE clients to meet. SU! PARTE does not have truck driving training because UNM-Valencia

Campus does not have existing resources in that area and it would be an expensive program to start up. However, SU! PARTE has established contact with employers in all the other hot industries and has designed its training to meet their needs. To ensure that this is the case SU! PARTE has often asked employers to review the programs it offers. At the time of our visit the new job skills certificate proposal had been submitted to local manufacturers for their feedback. Already in June-July 1998 SU! PARTE conducted a market survey of employers to evaluate the relevance of the its classes. As a result of the survey part of the curriculum was revised to meet the needs outlined by employers. Non-profit organizations in the area, such as the Valencia Domestic Violence shelter, have not only been tapped as service providers but also as sources for community service volunteer opportunities and employment for SU! PARTE clients. For example, Fedelina Romero, a former SU! PARTE client, is now a paid full time training specialist for the Valencia Domestic Violence Shelter.

30 to 40 percent of SU! PARTE clients assessed are placed in jobs. However, 90 to 100 percent of those who attend the SU! PARTE Job Club class, which is about 20 to 40 students a month, are placed. The average starting hourly wage for all clients who had been placed in full time jobs as of February 1999 was $6.98. For the Job Club its instructor draws on her own network of contacts and her work experience in many fields including as a business owner. She has her students use the resources and job database of the DOL office on campus. However, she also makes them aware that there is a hidden job market which students need to tap into. One of the resources she has to help students do this is SU! PARTE's own network of alumni who will call and let

her know of job openings. She is also working on getting small businesses more involved as employers for the SU! PARTE clients.

The contributions of the SU! PARTE program manager, the program coordinator, and the job club instructor have made it possible for SU! PARTE to establish contacts with employers. However, the difficulties in securing job developers and thus having staff dedicated to maintaining contacts with employers has been a barrier to establishing stronger links with them. At the time of our visit SU! PARTE was hoping to hire 2 or 3 job developers in the near future. At the campus level a new assistant dean of instruction was hired in the business and technology area to help the community education services manager with contract training and links and coordination with the local DOL office, the small business development center, and career center.

College Leadership

The role of the University of New Mexico branch campuses, including the Valencia Campus, is to serve the educational needs of New Mexico citizens throughout the state, be an integral part of their surrounding communities, and assist in the economic development of their service areas[16]. Alice V. Letteney, the UNM-Valencia Campus Executive Director, thus rejects the idea that her campus would be an isolated educational institution. Instead she perceives it as an important community center with the ability to facilitate economic development, cultural affairs, and social service. She sees the SU! PARTE program as an extension of the institution's mission to serve it's

[16] UNM-Valencia Campus 1997-1999 catalog.

community as it has in the past through it's adult education, JTPA, community education and other programs. Letteney points out: "we were the only ones in the county who could do it effectively" because of the campus' facilities, the adult education program and expertise, the DOL office on campus, student services, and the good program development and coordination. The program was developed from the start as a collaborative effort between the Adult Education Center, the Community Education Services, Career Services and Student Services at the campus. The Associate Director for Program Development, Olga Gandara, is the Principal Investigator for the SU! PARTE grant. As such she is responsible for the technical components of SU! PARTE's grant such as its budget and provides the management oversight for the program. She reports directly to the Campus' Executive Director. Gandara has been instrumental in integrating SU! PARTE within the college and assisting the program reduce staff turnover.

The SU! PARTE program was also seen by the campus as an opportunity to reach out to a new population of potential students. Initially the college thought 30 percent of the SU! PARTE clients would enroll in credit classes at the college. However, in addition to the low ABE test results of SU! PARTE participants SU! PARTE's program manager Yvonne Hart reported that 30 percent of them are not interested in attending college. At the time of our visit 130 SU! PARTE clients had enrolled in credit classes since the beginning of the program. This corresponds to about 7.5 percent of the clients assessed. However, with the new intensive GED class this number may increase. Despite the realization that SU! PARTE students' need for remediation is greater than

was expected the campus leadership has continued to support the program and has worked to educate state legislators about the basic skill needs of TANF recipients. Nevertheless, the college feels challenged in every system it has from classroom allocations to security. There has also been some skepticism expressed on the part of some faculty members. In order to inform faculty of SU! PARTE's progress Gary Sanchez, the program's coordinator, presented the latest results of the GED class to the Campus instructional council in February 1999. The fact that SU! PARTE operates under its own budget has helped forestall possible critics. Indeed, SU! PARTE pays for the rental of classroom space, its instructors, extra security on campus, and other campus services, and is thus not diverting resources from the college's other concerns.

The long-term prospects for SU! PARTE are tied to its state funding. This funding is expected to continue at least until the five year limit on benefits is reached. The success of SU! PARTE has been recognized and it is being considered by the state's HSD to expand its programs to three additional counties not yet serviced by any Welfare-to-Work program. Without external funding the UNM-Valencia Campus cannot financially support the extra services provided by SU! PARTE. However, the college is committed to the program and would continue to serve some of its students through their adult basic education classes. The college is also adding a new building with a childcare center and more short-term programs, both of which may increase the likelihood that SU! PARTE clients continue their studies. Furthermore, the close working relationships developed with HSD, the local DOL office, and other local employers and non profits are now part of the web of networks and community links the college will

maintain. The SU! PARTE program has already brought further resources to the campus. The Adult Education Center has received 60,000 dollars (half from the DOL and half from the department of education) to purchase the Invest "Destinations" comprehensive skills software for a pilot project aimed at demonstrating how agencies can work together to the benefit of their clients. The collaboration will be between ABE, the DOL, and the Welfare-to-Work program. The software helps students learn basic skills and includes GED preparation, workforce development basics, college success basics as well as a built in management system which should allow the agencies to develop a common intake form.

Being part of the UNM University system has also had some advantages. The University had already received funding for a Welfare-to-Work program during the first round of funding and the Valencia Campus was able to learn from the expertise gained by the university. Another important advantage is that being part of the university has allowed the Campus Executive Director to take more risks than if she had been the head of an independent community college. Nevertheless, the university has also been a cumbersome fiscal agent for SU! PARTE. However, the greatest drawback of being part of the university system is that all contracts have to go through the main campus. As a result hiring new staff, especially the needed job developers, is time consuming and difficult.

The support of the Campus Executive Director and the management oversight and UNM experience of the Assistant Director for Program Development have facilitated the success of SU! PARTE. However, because it is a dedicated program it is unclear how much of its successful practices will be integrated into the college though this is facilitated by SU! PARTE's cooperation with other programs on campus. Furthermore, the campus' ability to serve the social service needs of SU! PARTE's clients is linked to the availability of specific external financial support for these services.

State Legislation[17]

One of the main characteristics of the Welfare-to-Work legislation in New Mexico is that it has changed many times. New Mexico was the last state to finalize its Welfare-to-Work reform. The delay was due to disagreements between the state's legislature and Governor. In 1997, Governor Gary Johnson, who felt its work requirements were insufficient, vetoed the legislature's reform proposal. Instead he implemented his PROGRESS Welfare-to-Work plan which was stricter than the federal legislation and included a 60 day work requirement, a three year time limit on benefits, and new income eligibility requirements.[18] The plan was challenged by advocate groups and, after several months of implementation, was found to be unconstitutional by the New Mexico courts in October 1997. However, the governor refused to change the PROGRESS plan and was found to be in contempt of court. During this period, agencies were operating

[17] Much of the data for this section comes from the following sources: New Mexico Work Program: Training Packet for the Tenured Worker, 3/10/98. New Mexico Human Services Register, Vol. 21, No. 34, June 29, 1998. SU PARTE activity flow chart hand out.

[18] New Mexico Forges Ahead on Welfare: State Legislatures May 1998 by Jack Tweedie. National Conference of State Legislatures. Http://www.ncsl.org/statefed/welfare/newmex.html.

under an interim law and the old work and food stamp programs. A new welfare reform act, the New Mexico Works Act, was developed as a compromise and passed on April 1, 1998. Similarly to the federal legislation it places a time limit of 5 years on all benefit recipients starting July 1, 1997. However, New Mexico Work developed a series of other timelines. TANF recipients must be assessed within 15 days of their benefit approval; they must have an individual assessment plan and have started an alternate or qualified work activity within two months. Aid recipients must be in this work activity for at least 29 hours a week. As a compromise the work requirement provisions of the New Mexico Works Act also mirror the federal legislation. Recipients must have obtained paid employment within 24 months of approval into the program. Qualfied work activities include full time employment, community service, job search (maximum of six weeks in a year), vocational education, GED, ESL, life or job skills classes, free child care provider for other New Mexico Works participants, substance abuse treatment, homeless looking for a home, and domestic violence treatment. Some of these activities only qualify for limited amounts of time. For example, GED preparation classes can only be counted as four hours a week for twelve weeks towards recipients' required 29 hours of work activity. New Mexico Works also provides monthly transportation reimbursement (except for those employed), monthly child care reimbursements (with a co-pay for those employed), payment of usual employment expenses connected with getting or keeping a job, and reimbursement for educational fees, books and supplies. TANF recipients can be in vocational education linked to employment for a maximum of one year. Recipients can also count four hours of their education in a non-employable field, post secondary education for more than a year, or a post Bachelor's program towards

their 29 hours of required work activity. All of these educational options are only available for up to 30 percent of the state's TANF population. TANF recipients must submit monthly attendance sheets to show that they have completed their 29 hours of qualified work activity. Recipients are sanctioned for not complying with the requirements of New Mexico Works. They can loose 25 percent of their benefits for failure to report a first time, 50 percent for a second time and the third time their case can be closed. These sanctions were put in place in December 1998 in Valencia County. Hence, SU! PARTE accomplished most of its work without sanctions in place. In certain under-serviced areas of the state sanctions are not yet in effect. The state also requires food stamp recipients to meet slightly different work requirements.

The fluctuating state policy and the changing cabinet secretaries of Human Services and HSD contract administrators under whose jurisdiction the SU! PARTE program comes have not provided an environment conducive to program development. Instead the SU! PARTE staff has been in a reactive mode trying to keep up with legislative changes and requirements. Since July 1997, when the funds for SU! PARTE were awarded to the college, the program has come under three different cabinet secretaries, several HSD contract managers, and has had three months without a contract manager. As Yvonne Hart explained in her December 4, 1998 report to the programs' state HSD contract manager:

"The monumental level of change in personnel [at the HSD state office], statute and policy has been a significant and costly barrier to developing a system or infrastructure for service provision at our level. We have retooled our database and forms over six times in response to this change and competing, sometimes conflicting mandates from the state.

"If I were to summarize all of these issues it would be to say that Chaotic Change and in-ability to plan have been a huge barrier to implementation. The nature of the work is a challenge, but the obstacles we have faced have very little to do with the scope of the work or nature of our clients' barriers to employment."

Although the changes in legislation have made SU! PARTE's work more difficult they have also provided opportunities to educate legislators about the skill level of TANF recipients and their need for basic skills education and GED preparation. The campus Executive director, Alice Letteney, and the SU! PARTE program manager, Yvonne Hart, meet legislators and presented the finding about the low educational level of SU! PARTE clients. Hart and Letteney's hope was to educate legislators about the need for TANF recipients to obtain a GED or higher degree in order to earn a living wage. According to Letteney, the new secretary of Human Services, Alex Valdez, understands the need for TANF recipients to obtain a GED although he is not persuaded of the need for education much beyond that.

Conclusion

The UNM-Valencia Campus provides an example of the role a community college can play in serving the Welfare-to-Work needs of the disadvantaged in its community when no other institution is available to do so. Although the SU! PARTE program is part of the Valencia campus it is a full service organization dedicated to serving the needs of "hard to serve" TANF and food stamp recipients. Its clients tend to have very low educational levels, little job experience, and many are victims of domestic violence. They are referred to the program for mandatory assessment and participation. Many have low self-esteem and/or are not motivated to participate in the program. In October 1998 despite increases in participation rates, SU! PARTE was still working to reduce a 50 percent noncompliance rate among TANF and food stamp recipients. At that time, without the state sanctions in place, the program manager estimated that about 30 percent of TANF recipients completed the programs they enrolled for.

SU! PARTE provides an extensive array of support services to eliminate barriers to its clients' program participation and job placement. These include a three-part assessment process to identify the obstacles facing individual clients as well as their interests and skills. The assessment process, through its core class, also attempts to provide a sense of belonging and possibility as well as a venue for the anger that many clients feel. SU! PARTE clients have access to other support services including van transportation, child-care information and assistance, small business development assistance and domestic

violence counseling. In addition, SU! PARTE case managers cooperate closely with HSD caseworkers to ensure the delivery of state funded supports and staff in particularly difficult cases.

The program's classes are designed to focus on basic skills with the objective of increasing student's comfort and basic competencies to succeed in either college or employer based vocational training. The SU! PARTE program has also adapted its instructional practices and designed its curriculum to provide a supportive and student centered environment drawing on adult education and disability/vocational rehabilitation methods. For example, the GED class includes student centered and experiential based teaching methods and the structure of having the same instructor, classroom, and intensive schedule. As a result it has been successful in helping students with very low grade levels obtain their GED. Although only 7.5 percent of those assessed by SU! PARTE enroll in college level courses the program has continued to devote a portion of its resources to increasing this percentage. SU! PARTE's program is also designed with an important feedback component which informs continued program improvements. These are made possible due to the flexibility with which the curriculum can be changed and the close working relationship established with other entities such as the HSD and the Valencia county domestic violence shelter. One strength of the program is its links with and investment in outside agencies as service providers and sources of volunteer and possible employment opportunities for students. This helps lay the foundation for a more permanent coordinated community response to the needs of SU! PARTE clients and increases the likelihood that the support services which SU! PARTE sub-contract will

continue to be available if the SU! PARTE program is no longer funded. However, with regards to employers the development of job placement collaborations is limited by the program's difficulties in securing job developers. Nevertheless, existing staff have established contacts with employers and used their input to improve program design.

SU! PARTE also benefits from the support of the campus leadership. The campus' executive director was directly involved in envisioning how this program would fit within the priorities of the campus and how it could be a source of more student for the college. Despite the realization that SU! PARTE students' need for remediation were greater than expected the campus leadership has continued to support the program and has worked to educate state legislators about the needs of TANF recipients.

The UNM-Valencia Campus has responded to the national Welfare-to-Work reform initiative. It applied for and obtained a $1.1 million contract from the New Mexico HSD to serve TANF and food stamp recipients in Valencia county. SU! PARTE provides them with dedicated case management and support services not preciously available at the Valencia Campus. With regards to pedagogy the regular college classes have not changed as a result of the new TANF student population since most of these students do not attend college classes. SU! PARTE's new integration of methods from the disability and vocational rehabilitation fields are specific to its dedicated classes. One of the areas in which the increase of TANF clients is having an impact is the campus Adult Education Center. It has received funds for computer software, which will provide it with new pedagogical tools and further interagency cooperation. SU! PARTE is not changing

the college's approach to providing training. The college only has few short-term career ladder oriented programs. However, it is important to note that it already had in place a remedial education and basic skills system integrated as part of its regular curriculum to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students prior to welfare reform. One impact of the Welfare-to-Work reform has been to increase interagency collaboration by the college at large. Through SU! PARTE the college has strengthened or created ties with agencies such as the DOL and HSD and with employers. In addition, the college leadership has become involved in discussing the role of education in Welfare-to-Work legislation by informing legislators about the educational needs of SU! PARTE clients.

SU! PARTE is a social service agency that operates as part of a community college. It is allowing the campus to meet the needs of its community and increase its role as a one stop service provider for the area for education, employment, and social services. However, these social services are dependent on the continued funding of SU! PARTE's activities. Because of UNM-Valencia campus' unique position as one of the only entities with the infrastructure and facilities to provide centralized Welfare-to-Work services in Valencia County and the responsiveness and effectiveness of its SU! PARTE program it is unlikely that SU! PARTE's funding will be discontinued until the HSD no longer has sufficient clients to refer for services. In fact, in June 1999, SU! PARTE was in contract negotiations with the state HSD to expand its services to three other counties.

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